

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY UPDATE**December 11 - 17, 2014**

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1. [Secretary-General Tells Ukrainian PM, 'NATO Stands with You' \(12-16-2014\)](#)

Brussels — NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg discussed the alliance's efforts to support Ukraine's government with Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk at NATO headquarters December 15.

Stoltenberg praised Ukraine's commitment to its partnership with NATO despite challenging circumstances, and pledged ongoing political and practical support.

"Your visit just underlines the strong partnership between NATO and Ukraine. We also very much appreciate that we are able to develop our partnership. And especially because the people of Ukraine have chosen the path of democracy and closer cooperation with Europe," Stoltenberg said. "And we welcome that. We underline that the decision by the people of Ukraine has to be respected."

The secretary-general said that five trust funds created by NATO to help Ukraine improve its own security are now up and running. "They aim to make Ukraine's defense forces more modern, more transparent, and more effective," Stoltenberg said. NATO's contributions are in addition to bilateral support provided separately by individual allies.

Russia's continued actions to destabilize Ukraine were also discussed. "Mr. Prime Minister, you have shown a real desire to find a peaceful solution to this crisis," Stoltenberg said. "NATO fully supports Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity." Calling the Minsk agreements "the best

way to a peaceful solution,” Stoltenberg praised Ukraine’s efforts to implement the accords, and called on Russia to do the same.

Stoltenberg said a sovereign and stable Ukraine, firmly committed to democracy and the rule of law, is key to Euro-Atlantic security. “NATO will stand by you as you work towards that goal,” he said.

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2. Peace a Prerequisite to Mideast Prosperity, Kerry Says in London (12-16-2014)

Washington — The United States and its allies remain committed to traveling the long, difficult road to peace in the Middle East, Secretary of State John Kerry told reporters in London on December 16.

The secretary began the briefing by expressing his condolences to Australia and Pakistan for the tragic events that have taken place over the last 24 hours.

He deplored the brazen murders of innocent students in the Peshawar province of Pakistan, children whose lives were “wiped away by Taliban assassins who serve a dark and almost medieval vision.” To Australia he offered U.S. empathy for a senseless act of terrorism that cost lives in a Sydney shop, saying Americans grieved “with Australia and with the families of all those terrorized, injured, and killed.”

Those “attacks in Peshawar and Sydney underscore that threats locally are also threats globally,” Kerry said. “In today’s world, next door is everywhere. And that’s why the United States is engaged in more places with more partners on more issues than ever before, and we are committed with all those allies and partners to standing up to extremism and to the extremists themselves.”

He said the United States remains committed “to finding ways to help solve the challenges of the Middle East and of other places of extremism and of terrorist activity because we know too well that while it’s difficult work, it’s also the only course that has any possibility of taking us towards stability, towards prosperity, towards a future.”

The secretary described his recent meeting with European and Middle Eastern leaders on the way forward on Middle East peace as “candid and constructive,” adding that “many of us share a deep sense of urgency about this, given the constant threat of escalation and the dangers of a downward spiral of violence.”

The world’s leaders, mindful of the deeply held feelings and pent-up frustrations on both sides of the conflict, recognize “it is imperative to lower the temperature, end the tension, so that we have an opportunity to find a path that Israelis and Palestinians both want so desperately,” Kerry said. “The status quo is unsustainable for both parties and for the region.”

The secretary said the United States and its allies and friends in Europe and the Arab community are focused on a path that could lead to a different future, and “will remain deeply engaged not just with the Israelis and the Palestinians,” but on other regional conflicts such as those in Syria and Iraq.

In addition, the international community continues to stand up for the principle that Ukraine has the right to determine its own future, “that no matter how powerful and aggressive its neighbor, its borders should be sovereign and should be integral and respected,” Kerry said.

“As we look down this difficult road that’s before us and consider the complicated choices that we face, we simply cannot lose sight of the fact that that hard road leads to a better place,” the secretary concluded. “The United States recognizes the deeply felt aspiration for peace shared by the vast majority of Israelis and Palestinians, and we will continue to work with our friends and partners to find a path to the goal that we all share for a more peaceful and stable region.”

Related site:

[Kerry’s Press Briefing in London](#)

3. Kerry, Rice Call on South Sudan’s Leaders to Set Aside Dispute (12-16-2014)

Secretary of State John Kerry and National Security Advisor Susan Rice co-authored this commentary, published December 15 in the Washington Post.

South Sudan’s Leaders Need to Set Aside Their Dispute

By John F. Kerry and Susan E. Rice

In 2011, the world’s newest nation was born amid joyous celebrations. The international community welcomed South Sudan not just with cheers but also with promises of help. The hope and promise of that day are now at grave risk of being squandered if the nation’s leaders don’t at long last provide leadership.

Violence that erupted in the capital city of Juba last December spread quickly, [claiming the lives of thousands](#) of men, women, and children and reopening bitter ethnic divisions. In the time since, almost [2 million people have been displaced](#) from their homes, while residents in some parts of the country face the risk of famine. In a country that has so much potential and that has endured decades of conflict, the suffering and violence have had a devastating effect.

The tragedy is especially hard to accept because the violence was not imposed on South Sudan by outside forces; instead it was unleashed by a political dispute among the country’s leaders. Now, the responsibility is on their shoulders to halt the bloodshed and bring their country together. After months of delay and false pledges, both sides must return to negotiations, make necessary compromises and finally end this conflict without further delay. Barren vows and rosy words are not enough; too many people have died while too many promises have been broken. It is past time for South Sudan’s leaders to take responsibility and end the fighting.

To move forward, a transitional government with a mandate to create security agencies that protect all of South Sudan’s people — regardless of ethnicity or political alignment — is imperative. That government must develop a transparent system for managing the country’s resources and agree on an inclusive constitutional drafting process that focuses on improved governance. Given the level of past violence, a reconciliation plan must also be established, accompanied by efforts to investigate atrocities and ensure that those involved are held accountable for their crimes.

The South Sudanese people have many friends throughout the world, and none is more committed to their future than the United States. But the full value of those friendships cannot be realized unless and until the country’s leaders put the interests of their people above their own grievances.

The United States and our international partners have organized a massive humanitarian aid effort, supported a U.N. peacekeeping force whose members have risked their lives to save civilians and made repeated efforts to encourage reconciliation and a return to peace. We have worked with local and regional partners to document human rights abuses and support religious leaders as they work for reconciliation. All this is helpful, but none of it will be enough in the absence of effective leadership.

Working in close cooperation with our regional and international partners, we will continue to increase pressure on the parties until the violence ends. But we must also be clear that those who choose the path of continued conflict and destruction will face greater consequences.

We do not have the luxury of time. In South Sudan, hunger is often a threat, but when the cycle of planting and harvesting is disrupted, when grazing lands are turned into battlegrounds and when humanitarian [convoys are subject to attack](#), the threat becomes a crisis and the lives of millions hang in the balance. With each passing day, the ranks of the hungry and malnourished grow. This suffering will end only when the guns fall silent.

On this sad anniversary, we salute the men and women of South Sudan who still strive each day on behalf of peace. Our thoughts are with the leaders of the faith communities and civil society groups who have rejected hatred and embraced compassion and with the neighbors who have sheltered and safeguarded one another. South Sudan's leaders would be wise to follow their people's example.

The two of us have traveled to South Sudan many times. We know the country's promise and have seen firsthand the dedication, courage and incredible resilience of its people. We have witnessed the costs of conflict and shared in the exhilaration when it appeared that the years of fighting had given way to a new era of freedom and peace. We remember the long lines of voters standing and waiting with patient exuberance to vote in their country's referendum and joined with the crowds on independence day to celebrate the realization of peaceful self-determination.

Now, the whole world is watching to see what the leaders of South Sudan will do. Will they continue on the path of conflict and condemn their country to another year of suffering? Or will they make the hard choices, work together and restore to their country the hope that its citizens so richly deserve? For the sake of all the people of South Sudan, the choice must be for peace.

John F. Kerry is secretary of state. Susan E. Rice is national security adviser.

Related Articles:

[Diplomats Say South Sudan's People Deserve Peace](#)

4. Obama: 'Afghan Combat Mission Ends but Commitment Endures' (12-15-2014)

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Tyrone C. Marshall Jr.
DoD News, Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON, Dec. 15, 2014 – While the combat mission in Afghanistan is ending, the U.S. commitment to the nation will continue, President Barack Obama told U.S. troops today during a visit to Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey.

“In just two weeks, the transition that we’re making in Afghanistan will be complete,” he said. “Afghans will take full responsibility for their security.”

“This month,” he said, “after more than 13 years, our combat mission in Afghanistan will be over. This month America’s war will come to a responsible end.”

Still a Dangerous Place

However, Obama cautioned that Afghanistan is still a “very dangerous place.”

“But I want you, and every American who has served in Afghanistan, to be proud of what you’ve accomplished there,” he said, “because your generation -- the 9/11 generation -- has met every mission that’s been given to you.”

“You helped decimate the core al-Qaida leadership and deliver justice to Osama bin Laden,” Obama said. “He will not be attacking here anymore.”

The president listed a range of U.S. military accomplishments, including pushing back the Taliban, training Afghan forces to take the lead and making possible a historic election this year along with the first democratic transfer of power in Afghanistan’s history.

“Despite all of their challenges,” Obama said, “Afghans are now looking to the future, and that’s because of you. That makes us safer; it gives them a chance for a better future.”

Obama said when he took office there were nearly 180,000 troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, but by month’s end, there will be fewer than 15,000 remaining.

“We’ve now brought home about 90 percent of our troops,” he said. The time of deploying large ground forces with large military footprints to engage in overseas nation-building is coming to an end, Obama added.

And despite the military becoming leaner, Obama said, he will ensure it remains “the best-trained, the best-led, the best-equipped military in the history of the world, because the world will still be calling.”

Commitment to Afghanistan Endures

Obama said even as the combat mission ends, the U.S. commitment to Afghanistan will endure through a limited U.S. military presence there and the training and advising of Afghan forces.

“And we’ve got to conduct counterterrorism missions,” Obama said, “because there’s still remnants of al-Qaida there. After all the sacrifices you’ve made, we want to preserve the gains you’ve made.”

The president said in addition to a “stable and secure” Afghanistan, American leaders want to make sure that country is never again used to launch attacks against the U.S.

American Leadership

More broadly, Obama said there are still challenges to U.S. security around the globe and in times of crisis, people around the world -- even America’s critics -- look to one nation to lead and that is the United States.

“When the world calls on America,” he said, “we call on you, our men and women in uniform, because nobody can do what you can do.”

Obama said “nobody in history has been able to do what you’ve done.” He noted the U.S. military has led a global coalition against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant in Iraq and Syria.

“Because of you,” he said, “we have blunted their momentum, and we have put them on the defensive.”

“These terrorists are learning the same thing that the leaders of al-Qaida have learned the hard way. They may think that they can chalk up some quick victories, but our reach is long. We do not give up.”

“You threaten America, you will have no safe haven,” he said. “We will find you, and like petty tyrants and terrorists before you, the world is going to leave you behind and keep moving on without you, because we will get you. That's thanks to you service members.”

Life-saving Work in West Africa

Obama also noted the U.S. military has saved lives through its efforts in leading the fight against Ebola in West Africa.

“None of that would be possible without you,” he said. “That’s American leadership. That’s the difference you make.”

“Other countries are now willing to come in, because you laid the foundation,” Obama said.

“Ultimately,” he said, “we will have saved thousands of lives because of you. That’s the difference you’re making. There are people who are alive today because of what you guys are doing.”

Extraordinary Service

Obama, “on behalf of more than 300 million Americans,” thanked all U.S. service members for their “extraordinary service” and “send me” attitude.

“What makes us the best is all of you,” he said. “It’s your character and your willingness to say, ‘send me’; your dedication to duty and your courage, and your readiness to defend our values and our ideals of freedom and liberty, not just for us, but for people all around the world.”

“You are the backbone of the greatest nation on earth and you will always be that,” Obama said.

“For that, America is eternally grateful,” he said, “and I am incredibly proud to serve as your commander-in-chief.”

Related Sites:

[President Obama Thanks America's Troops and Marks a Milestone in the Afghanistan War](#)

5. [DoD Mobile Chemical-agent Destruction System Wins U.K. Award \(12-12-2014\)](#)

By Cheryl Pellerin

DoD News, Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON, Dec. 12, 2014 – A United Kingdom organization has given an innovation award to the Defense Department team responsible for developing and operating the field-deployable

hydrolysis systems used aboard the U.S. ship MV Cape Ray this year to destroy tons of Syrian chemical materials.

CBRN-UK, a British chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear industry special-interest group, presented the Tim Otter CBRN Innovator of the Year award yesterday to representatives of the DoD team, with members from the Joint Program Executive Office for Chemical and Biological Defense, or JPEO-CBD, and the U.S. Army Edgewood Chemical and Biological Center, or ECBC.

The organizations, located at the Edgewood Area of Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, were honored for their rapid response to world events in developing the field-deployable hydrolysis system.

It is the first time CBRN-UK has given the award to a company or organization outside the United Kingdom.

During a DoD News interview this week, Timothy Blades, director of ECBC's Chemical Biological Application and Risk Reduction Business Unit, and Lloyd Pusey, JPEO-CBD's product manager for the field-deployable hydrolysis system and joint project manager for elimination, discussed the award and their one-of-a-kind chemical-agent degradation system.

International Mission

Pusey deployed aboard the Cape Ray as a command post operator, monitoring and directing chemical destruction operations. He said the chemical operations crew, made up of 45 DoD civilian employees who volunteered for the mission, was eager to get the job done.

Blades, aboard ship as commander of the chemical operations team, said the mission was an international one and his team worked with the United Kingdom and many other countries to make it happen.

"The U.K. was very involved and contributed to providing destruction capability for some of the other chemicals involved in the Syrian stockpile," Blades added. "So we've enjoyed a close relationship with the U.K. in this whole endeavor, and it's very much an honor to be considered a top innovator by them."

Blades said the award is a tribute to the talent, energy and commitment of the federal government employees responsible for the bulk of the system's conception, design, procurement, fabrication, installation and operation.

Bringing Experience to Bear

In late 2012, as the armed conflict in Syria spread into the region, DoD officials recognized that they lacked a deployable technology for destroying large amounts of chemical warfare materiel such as the Syrian chemical weapons stockpile.

While the international community engaged with the Syrian government on giving up its stockpile, JPEO-CBD and ECBC formed a team to bring decades of chemical weapons destruction experience to bear on the problem.

Other team members came from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency and the U.S. Army Contracting Command.

The hydrolysis system was a fast-track acquisition project initiated officially in February 2013. Within six months, the team had conceived, designed, built and systemized a deployable system.

One-of-a-kind System

By mid- to late-2013, with no nation willing to permit Syrian chemical agents to be destroyed on its soil, the team quickly adapted and installed two field-deployable hydrolysis units aboard the 648-foot Maritime Administration Ready Reserve ship MV Cape Ray.

The system is designed to process bulk liquid chemical warfare agents, essentially mixing the chemicals with heated water, sodium hydroxide and sodium hypochlorite bleach to produce a low-level chemical waste that's treated to reduce acidity. The waste is then stored in containers for delivery to commercial waste-treatment facilities.

The Cape Ray's chemical cargo from Syria consisted of 581 tons of methylphosphonyl difluoride, or DF, the main precursor of sarin and other nerve agents, and 19.8 tons of sulfur mustard, a blister agent.

The chemical operations crew used the hydrolysis system to degrade the chemical agents in less than six weeks while the Cape Ray navigated the Caribbean Sea.

Afterward, Pusey said, the Cape Ray transported the resulting chemical waste to Hamina, Finland, where the neutralized DF waste was offloaded, and Bremen, Germany, where the neutralized sulfur mustard waste was offloaded, both to be stored at land-based facilities.

Pusey said the team that deployed aboard the Cape Ray depended heavily on reach-back support from their colleagues at JPEO-CBD and ECBC.

"There were a lot of folks involved from both organizations who were supporting the efforts from Edgewood who deserve an enormous amount of credit," he added.

Morale Was High

The Cape Ray arrived back in Portsmouth, Virginia, Sept. 17, and ECBC operators remained on board until month's end to demobilize and recover the equipment from the ship and decontaminate parts of the field-deployable hydrolysis system that had been exposed to chemical agents so the ship could be returned to the U.S. Maritime Administration.

Pusey, who acted mainly as a control room or command post operator during his months aboard the Cape Ray, said the mission was a roller coaster ride on the front end, noting that the ship staged in Rota, Spain, as it awaited its mission.

"There was a lot of waiting in Rota, and that's understandable given the circumstances of the chemicals that were coming out of Syria, ... but morale was extremely high when we took off and hit Italy and the port at Gioia Tauro to pick up the chemicals," he said.

In hindsight, he said, the chemical-agent processing went remarkably well, but he found the day-to-day job of working with the chemicals in a completely new way an emotional experience.

“We spent months planning for this, and there was still some emotional involvement in whether or not all of our planning was going to pay off,” Pusey explained, adding that the technical achievement of the field-deployable hydrolysis system is the highlight of his career.

The Fate of the System

The system’s success prompted much enthusiasm and conjecture about its future uses, Blades said, “but we’ve been aggressive in cautioning folks ... that the process appeared easy, quick and clean from the outside ... but it wasn’t a walk in the sun.”

The process of putting the system together was hugely complex, he said, requiring a lot of thought and very hard work.

Still, there has been conjecture in the media, other discussions and sidebar conversations with policy officials about how the system might be used, Blades said, “but we haven’t been asked to pack stuff up and start taking it places.”

Pusey said that an enormous number of possibilities exist for the kinds of liquid bulk chemical material the system could be used to process.

“They’re a fairly generic combination of chemical processing equipment,” he added, “it was just unique the way they were assembled and applied in this case.”

But the system was designed with the capability to deal with other chemicals of concern -- precursors and the standard nerve agents, he added.

Decisions to Be Made

Today, Pusey said, his job involves the next step for the field-deployable hydrolysis system hardware, “and frankly it’s very uncertain.” Seven systems originally were produced.

“Sitting here at Edgewood,” he added, “barring a bright idea on someone’s part about a constructive use of the equipment, I will end up having to propose and get approval to, at a minimum, put it on the shelf, and, at worst, dispose of it because keeping it costs money.”

Considerable work remains to be done, and decisions have yet to be made on the fate of the hardware, Pusey said. “It may very well be the right thing to do to dispose of the equipment,” he said. “If there’s a use for it, it may be the right thing to do to keep it. ... We still have to work through that.”

Related Sites:

[Special Report: Cape Ray](#)

6. [Airstrikes Against ISIL Continue in Syria, Iraq \(12-12-2014\)](#)

From a Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve News Release

SOUTHWEST ASIA, Dec. 12, 2014 – U.S. and partner-nation military forces have continued to attack Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant terrorists in Syria and Iraq over the last three days, Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve officials reported.

Fighter and bomber aircraft have conducted seven airstrikes in Syria since Dec. 10, officials said. Five airstrikes near Kobani destroyed five ISIL fighting positions and struck another ISIL fighting position. An airstrike near Aleppo struck five ISIL-occupied buildings, and near al-Qaim, on the Syrian border, an airstrike destroyed two ISIL fortifications.

Iraq Airstrikes

Separately, U.S. and partner-nation forces have conducted 20 airstrikes in Iraq since Dec. 10, using fighter, bomber, attack, and remotely-piloted aircraft against the ISIL terrorists, officials said, providing the following details:

- Four airstrikes near Sinjar destroyed an ISIL armored vehicle and two ISIL storage containers and also struck another ISIL armored vehicle and an ISIL checkpoint.
- Near Ramadi, four airstrikes destroyed an excavator and five ISIL vehicles and also struck an ISIL-occupied building and three ISIL units.
- Three airstrikes near Rutbah destroyed two bulldozers and an ISIL storage container.
- Near Mosul, three airstrikes destroyed a bunker and a bulldozer and also struck an excavator.
- Three airstrikes near Qaim destroyed four ISIL vehicles, two ISIL-occupied buildings, an ISIL storage container and an ISIL guard tower and also struck an ISIL bunker.
- Near Samarra, an airstrike struck a large ISIL unit.
- An airstrike near Rawah destroyed an ISIL guard shack.
- An airstrike near Asad struck an ISIL staging area.

All aircraft returned to base safely, officials said, noting that airstrike assessments are based on initial reports.

Part of Operation Inherent Resolve

The strikes were conducted as part of Operation Inherent Resolve, the operation to eliminate the ISIL terrorist group and the threat they pose to Iraq, the region and the wider international community. The destruction of ISIL targets in Syria and Iraq further limits the terrorist group's ability to project terror and conduct operations, officials said.

Coalition nations conducting airstrikes in Iraq include the United States, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Coalition nations conducting airstrikes in Syria include the United States, Bahrain, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

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[Special Report: Operation Inherent Resolve - Targeted Operations Against ISIL Terrorists](#)

7. DTRA Medical Countermeasures Help West African Ebola Crisis (12-12-2014)

By Cheryl Pellerin
DoD News, Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON, Dec. 12, 2014 – Since 2003, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency has invested more than \$300 million to develop medical countermeasures against hemorrhagic fever viruses, and those efforts are paying off today in potential new ways to fight Ebola virus disease.

DTRA's mission is to protect the United States and its allies from chemical, nuclear, biological and other weapons of mass destruction, and deadly pathogens fall into the WMD category, DTRA Deputy Director Air Force Maj. Gen. John Horner said during a recent interview with DoD News.

"We plan to be in this business for the long term," he added, "and need to do biosurveillance and strengthen biosecurity worldwide, helping partner countries build their capacity to prevent, treat and monitor the threat of infectious diseases."

More than 17,290 cases of Ebola virus disease and at least 6,128 deaths have been reported to date in West Africa, according to the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the lack of licensed Ebola vaccines and treatments has accelerated efforts, including DTRA's, to get these medical products into the regulatory approval pipeline.

Ebola Vaccine Candidates

This year, in coordination with DTRA, the Public Health Emergency Medical Countermeasures Enterprise working group chose three lead candidates — two vaccines and one treatment — to go forward in the Food and Drug Administration approval pipeline as part of the U.S. Ebola outbreak response.

The vaccine candidates are recombinant VSV-EBOV, from BioProtection Systems/Newlink Genetics, and ChAd-EBOV from GlaxoSmithKline. DTRA is supporting development of the VSV-EBOV vaccine through a contract with BioProtection Systems/Newlink Genetics. NIAID is supporting the ChAd-EBOV vaccine.

The VSV candidate is based on a recombinant, or genetically engineered, virus from an animal disease called vesicular stomatitis. An Ebola virus protein is engineered into a vesicular stomatitis virus, and the new recombinant virus acts as a vector, or carrier, to deliver the Ebola protein into the human body. Genetic engineering is a healthy way to express proteins like Ebola that prompts the body to produce antibodies to lethal Ebola virus disease without the risk of disease from either virus.

The other vaccine is a recombinant chimpanzee adenovirus, or cold virus. In this vaccine, an Ebola virus protein is engineered into a chimpanzee adenovirus to deliver the ChAd-EBOV vaccine into people to produce Ebola antibodies.

Human Testing is Underway

Human testing to evaluate the safety of VSV-EBOV is underway at the National Institutes of Health Clinical Center in Bethesda, Maryland and the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, or WRAIR.

Researchers at the NIH National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, or NIAID, are conducting an early phase trial to evaluate the VSV-EBOV vaccine for safety and for its ability to generate an immune-system response in healthy adults who receive two injected doses.

At the same time, the WRAIR is testing the VSV-EBOV vaccine as a single dose at its Clinical Trials Center in Silver Spring, Maryland, NIH officials said.

For the ChAd-EBOV vaccine, in early stage clinical trials, again designed to assess vaccine safety and immune response, NIAID will test two versions of ChAd-EBOV.

One is a bivalent, or two-component, version containing genetic material from Ebola Zaire and Ebola Sudan strains. The other is a monovalent, or single-component, version that contains only genetic material from Ebola Zaire, the strain now causing the outbreak in West Africa.

Both vaccines were reviewed by the FDA under an investigational new drug, or IND, application.

Evaluating Vaccine Efficacy

“We should begin to see Phase II and III clinical trials take place in West Africa, probably in the January-February timeframe,” Dr. Ronald K. Hann Jr., director of research and development in DTRA’s Chemical and Biological Technologies Department, said.

He explained that these clinical trial phases evaluate the vaccines’ efficacy, or how well they work.

“We spoke to Doctors Without Borders recently, and they're helping to map out the Phase II-III clinical trial studies that would be taking place in West Africa,” Hann added, “and they're looking at both the [ChAd-EBOV and VSV-EBOV] vaccine candidates to go into those trials.”

Once either vaccine shows protection, according to a DTRA fact sheet, the trial will stop and the vaccine will be distributed in a mass immunization campaign to help end the Ebola epidemic.

A Promising Ebola Treatment

The lead therapeutic treatment candidate that DTRA and the Public Health Emergency Medical Countermeasures Enterprise working group named to move forward into the FDA pipeline is called ZMapp, from Mapp Biopharmaceutical.

But as early as 2007, DTRA, NIAID and the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute for Infectious Diseases, or USAMRIID, were funding efforts and working hard to show that the monoclonal antibody basis for the experimental drug actually would work.

ZMapp is a cocktail of three different monoclonal, or genetically engineered, Ebola virus disease antibodies that bind to Ebola virus proteins in the body and neutralize the virus, decreasing the amount of virus the patient's immune system has to fight.

Dr. Erin Reichert, chief of the Translational Medical Division of the Chemical and Biological Technologies Department in DTRA’s Research and Development Directorate, describes the road to development for ZMapp.

“Along with our colleagues at USAMRIID and NIAID, we had a small investment in looking at whether or not monoclonal antibodies or antibody-based therapeutics in general would be an appropriate therapeutic countermeasure for Ebola,” she said.

Passive Immunotherapy

In the scientific community, as early as 2007, researchers debated the value of this so-called passive immunotherapy, or passive transfer, for treating Ebola.

“We funded researchers at USAMRIID, and NIAD had small investments through small-business grants directly to Mapp Biopharmaceutical to determine once and for all if antibodies could be a viable countermeasure”, Reichert said.

Then in the 2012 timeframe, she added, important publications came out of USAMRIID that changed the way researchers viewed antibodies for filovirus infection. Ebola and Marburg viruses both are filoviruses.

“One of those papers was by Dr. John M. Dye Jr., now chief in USAMRIID’s Viral Immunology Branch,” Reichert said. “He demonstrated for the first time that antibodies from primates exposed to Ebola virus could be transferred to naive primates to protect them from infection. That opened the door for this as far as a viable countermeasure.”

Putting Dollars Against the Product

Also in 2012, she added, DTRA and NIAID “really started putting some dollars against the product and in a very short period of time we were able to accelerate development to a point where, while it is still a research and development product, we have a product that could be useful in people.”

ZMapp was developed through a DTRA contract with Mapp Biopharmaceutical and in collaboration with USAMRIID, Defyrus LLC and the Public Health Agency of Canada, according to a DTRA fact sheet.

The ZMapp three-antibody cocktail was discovered in 2014 but the monoclonal antibody research began in 2007.

BARDA is sponsoring the manufacture of ZMapp for Phase I and II clinical studies, which are expected to start in early 2015 at NIAID. Other clinical studies are scheduled to begin in affected African countries in early 2015. ZMapp has been used under an emergency investigational new drug application in Ebola-infected patients in the United States, Africa and elsewhere, according to a White House fact sheet.

Protecting the Force

“We’ve been working very closely with our interagency partners to develop these vaccines and therapeutics to protect the force against a broad range of filoviruses,” Reichert said.

In response to the West Africa Ebola epidemic, development of vaccines and ZMapp has accelerated to focus specifically on delivering something for Zaire, she added.

“Along with our interagency partners -- HHS as well as JPEO have been really critical — we’ve been able, in a very short period of time, to push those through the regulatory process to get them to a point where they may have an impact on the current epidemic,” Reichert said.

Related Sites:

[Defense Threat Reduction Agency](#)

[Special Report: Operation United Assistance](#)

8. F-35 European Maintenance Sites Announced (12-11-2014)

By Claudette Roulo
DoD News, Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON, Dec. 11, 2014 – The F-35 Lightning II joint strike fighter program office announced today the European locations for heavy engine and heavy air frame maintenance, repair, overhaul and upgrade facilities.

"In the European region, F-35 initial air frame MROU capability will be provided by Italy by 2018," Air Force Lt. Gen. Christopher C. Bogdan told reporters.

Bogdan is the Program Executive Officer for the F-35 Lightning II Joint Program Office in Arlington, Virginia.

Italy has invested \$1 billion into a purpose-built final assembly and check-out facility for the F-35, he said.

"As Italy builds up their production capability at the FACO, there's an opportunity later on to add more production capacity to that FACO if other partners and the U.S. want to build their planes there," the general said. If the facility does shift toward production, Bogdan explained, the United Kingdom would be assigned to provide additional air frame depot capability.

Engine heavy maintenance will initially be provided by Turkey by 2018, he said, "with Norway and the Netherlands providing additional capability two to three years after Turkey's initial capability."

Test cells for engine heavy maintenance are "very expensive -- in the tens of millions of dollars," the general said, and no single partner or their industry was willing to invest in more than one test cell in their nation.

"That's a big risk for industry and that partner long-term to get the return on that investment," Bogdan said. Based on projections by the program office, at least three test cells were needed in order to build a sustainable program in Europe, he said.

Global Sustainment Posture

The announcement is the next step in establishing a global sustainment posture for the aircraft, the general said, noting that he expects to announce the Pacific region locations next week. Regional assignments for components, systems repair, warehousing, support equipment and other global supply chain functions will begin next year, Bogdan added, eventually totaling hundreds of billions of dollars in potential work.

"There is much work still to be had on the F-35 global sustainment posture," he said, "and we will go through a similar process over the next few years of assigning that capability to those areas and those partners that provide us the best value for doing that kind of work."

Partner nations and countries participating in the foreign military sales program for the F-35 who also wish to be assigned MROU work are responsible for making the investments in their own infrastructure, the general said.

"Over time, the workload that gets sent to that partner nation is the way in which their industry can recoup that investment cost," Bogdan said.

Site Selection Process

The final site determinations were made after the F-35 program office solicited and evaluated proposals from nations interested in being assigned heavy engine or heavy airframe work, he said.

A site survey team visited each nation that responded, the general said, and the evaluations and site visits were used to compile a list of recommended locations for review by the Defense Department.

DoD's final decision took into consideration a number of factors in addition to the recommendations by the program office, Bogdan said, including geography, operational necessity and the expected distribution of aircraft.

Multiple Sites Guarantee Flexibility

Each nation that sets up a regional capability is guaranteed to always receive a workload that is equivalent to the number of aircraft it purchases, the general said. But as basing decisions change over time, he added, the additional regionally assigned workloads may shift based on who can provide the best value given past performance.

"We will probably look at this on a two- to three-year basis," he said, adding that cost is not the only consideration in determining best value.

"When you look at a best value type of arrangement, you're looking at quality of the work, you're looking at delivery schedule and are they meeting it, and you're looking at cost," Bogdan said.

The site decisions will have no effect on where the F-35 is based, the general said.

"Those decisions are made at the DoD level for reasons other than this," he said. "The reason why we're standing up capability in all three regions is to provide the partners and the U.S. the freedom of maneuver and the freedom of action to base the plane anywhere they want globally and still have access to the kinds of support we need to keep the F-35 fleet going."

Biographies:

[Air Force Lt. Gen. Christopher C. Bogdan](#)

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